

BRISTOL AND AMERICA 1480-1631



PATRICK McGRATH

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Cover Illustration: 'A Werouan or great Lord of Virginia', from an engraving by Theodore de Bry - these were probably the first natives encountered by early explorers of the North East coast

BRISTOL AND AMERICA 1480-1631

The interest which Bristolians showed in the New World varied considerably in the century and a half between John Jay's unsuccessful search for the Isle of Brasil in 1480 and Thomas James's equally unsuccessful search for a northwest passage in 1631. On occasion Bristolians were deeply concerned, but for long periods they ignored America. In some respects the story was one of high hopes which were not fulfilled and of enterprises which achieved little. It is possible that men from Bristol were the first to discover land across the Atlantic and kept quiet about it, or even lost it again. Some Bristolians gave support to John Cabot, but in the course of the sixteenth century his name was largely forgotten in Bristol. There was an intensification of effort in the first decade of the sixteenth century, but thereafter interest was rarely shown, and the city played only a minor part in Elizabethan explorations. In the seventeenth century there was a revival of activity both in exploration and in colonization, but in the end little was achieved. The voyage of Captain Thomas James in 1631 completed what was, from the point of view of investors, an unprofitable record.

A great deal has been written in recent years about various aspects of this subject, but it is worthwhile looking again at what was attempted by Bristolians. What they did has tended to be considered as part of the much larger story of English exploration, and so it is also desirable to examine, as far as the scanty evidence permits, the more limited problem of Bristol's financial involvement and to ask how many Bristolians actually contributed, what motives inspired them and what capital they invested in these hopeful but unsuccessful ventures.

The first known voyage from Bristol out into the Atlantic in search of 'the Isle of Brasil' was the venture of John Jay junior in 1480. The evidence for this is William Worcestre's *Itinerarium*, and Worcestre stated that the voyage was unsuccessful.¹ Another attempt was made in 1481. This expedition consisted of two ships - the *George* and the *Trinity* - and we know of it only because Thomas Croft, one of the Customers of Bristol, who owned a one-eighth share in each of the ships, was

subsequently accused of engaging in trade, which he was not entitled to do while he held the office of Customer. The conclusion of the inquiry was that Croft was not engaged in trade and that the ships had been sent out 'to thentent to serch & fynde a certain Isle called the Isle of Brasile ...'.² Whether or not the voyage of 1481 succeeded, we do not know.

After 1481, there is no evidence of any voyage from Bristol into the Atlantic until the 1490s, and what we have then is rather less satisfactory than the evidence for the voyages of 1480 and 1481. On 25 July 1498, after John Cabot's successful venture, Pedro de Ayala, the Spanish representative in London, reported to his sovereigns that 'For the last seven years the people of Bristol have equipped two, three [and] four caravels to go in search of the island of Brazil and the Seven Cities, according to the fancy of this Genoese'.³ If he was right, then a really massive effort was being made by Bristolians in the 1490s, and it is possible to speculate, as does D.B. Quinn, on whether these ventures were voyages to the fishing banks off Newfoundland which had been discovered earlier and which were now being exploited by Bristolians, or whether, as Alwyn Ruddock suggests, they were desperate efforts to find again fishing grounds which had been discovered by chance before 1480 but the way to which had subsequently been lost.⁴ When experts in the field have taken Ayala at face value, it may seem rash to question his reliability, but as a witness he is not quite in the same category as William Worcestre, who knew Bristol and who was related to the Jay family, or the Bristol jurors who, in answer to an Exchequer inquisition, stated that the voyage of 1481 had been for exploration and not for trade.⁵ Ayala, as far as we know, had never been to Bristol, and it seems surprising that an effort on the scale he suggests, spread over seven years and involving at least sixteen ships, and possibly well over twenty, should have left no mark on the records. He may have simply been reporting what he had been told in London, and what he was told may have been true, but his unsupported testimony must be treated with some caution.

There may, of course, have been other voyages of which we know nothing,⁶ and we have yet to consider the evidence of John Day's letter, but before doing so, it is worth commenting on what we know about the extent to which Bristolians were involved. Only a handful of Bristol merchants can be shown to be directly concerned. We know from William Worcestre that John Jay the younger was associated with the voyage of 1480. Worcestre mentioned him because he was himself related to the Jays. He appears to have left a blank for the names of other venturers, but did not fill it in.⁷ In the 1481 voyage, we know that

Thomas Croft was part-owner of the *Trinity* and the *George*, and it is a reasonable assumption that Croft was associated in the venture with three Bristol merchants, William Spencer, Robert Strange, and William de la Fount,⁸ but these are the only names for which we have direct evidence in the voyages of 1480 and 1481. There is nothing to support Williamson's conjecture that 'it is quite possible that this and other voyages of discovery may have been financed by the greater part of mercantile Bristol'.⁹ There is no information at all about the men who backed the voyages which Ayala alleges were sent out in the 1490s, but we can perhaps include in the list of those who were involved in the later fifteenth century the merchants Robert Thorne and Hugh Elyot, whom Robert Thorne the younger claimed in 1527 to be 'the discoverers of the Newfound Landes ...'.¹⁰ The circle could be widened a little if we included those involved in the Icelandic and Iberian trades, those who traded to the Iberian islands in the Atlantic and those who may have been in touch directly or indirectly with the explorations being carried out from Spain and Portugal.¹¹ Now, the number of people who can meaningfully be described as merchants in Bristol in the later fifteenth century must have been well over 100, and many more were engaged in foreign trade at least part of the time. Between September 1479 and July 1480, for example, about 250 individuals traded with Gascony, Spain, and Portugal alone.¹² Thus, as far as voyages of discovery are concerned only a tiny fraction of the merchants can be shown to be involved and we cannot establish that the merchant community as a whole was deeply concerned about exploration.

How much capital was invested we do not know. The ship sent out in 1480 was one of 80 tons and it was away from Bristol for nine weeks. Two ships were sent out in 1481: the *Trinity* and the *George*. If they were sailing under the licence granted to Thomas Croft and his three associates in 1480, they should not have been of greater burden than 60 tons, and Quinn suggests that they were probably small fishing vessels. If the *Trinity* which went out in 1481 was in fact the *Trinity* on which John Balsall was purser, then the tonnage was between 300 and 360, and the investment would have been considerable, but there was more than one *Trinity* in Bristol at this time, and Quinn's argument that it is unlikely that the large vessel went out with the *George* carries conviction.¹³ We have no evidence about the ships which Ayala alleges went out in the 1490s, and we cannot assert that Bristol merchants were investing on a major scale in exploration. It is possible that these ventures were probing voyages by small fishing vessels which a few Bristolians thought worth making but which did not involve great capital expenditure.

The voyages into the Atlantic required considerable, if not heavy expenditure, and those who invested in them lost the opportunity to employ their capital profitably elsewhere. It is at least possible that moderate investment in exploration was one of the consequences of the prosperity which Bristol was enjoying in the later fifteenth century. As Sherborne has pointed out, 'during the last twenty years of the fifteenth century Bristol exported more cloth, imported more wine and handled more goods subject to poundage than any other provincial port'.¹⁴ The search for new markets and new sources of supply could sometimes be the consequence of a major disturbance in the traditional pattern of trade, but could also take place in circumstances of prosperity when money was available for risky, but possibly very profitable, ventures. Some of the Bristol merchants may have felt that it was worth making a modest investment on an outsider.

Another problem is that we have no direct evidence about the motives of those concerned. Some Bristolians were directly or indirectly in contact with Portuguese and Spanish thinking about exploration, but as far as we know the men of Bristol who sent ships out into the Atlantic were not trying to find a new way to Asia, still less to engage in exploration for its own sake.¹⁵ One possible incentive was the need to find new fishing grounds for cod at a time when relations with Iceland were becoming increasingly difficult and Bristolians were finding it hard to obtain the stockfish which were so important in their Iberian trade.¹⁶ It is relevant that some of the Bristolians who were involved in the Iceland-Portuguese trade were also involved, at least peripherally, in the voyages of 1480 and 1481.¹⁷ It is, however, very difficult to say precisely how important the fisheries were in the total picture of Bristol's overseas trade in the later fifteenth century and to decide whether the decline and fall of the Icelandic trade really was the overriding and persistent motive which year after year led to men from Bristol 'launching voyages into the Atlantic wastes'.¹⁸ If we accept the possibility that the fisheries had been discovered some time after 1480 and that Ayala's voyages of the 1490s were not voyages of discovery but 'annual fishing fleets on their way to and from Newfoundland waters',¹⁹ it still remains surprising that Bristolians who had such an urgent need to exploit new sources of supply of cod were so slow to develop their interest in the Newfoundland fisheries in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

The problem of the pre-Cabot voyages from Bristol is complicated by John Day's letter which came to light in 1956.²⁰ The traditional story concerning John Cabot was that he came to Bristol in the 1490s because it was an obvious place to seek backing for his venture. Bristolians had

already sent out a number of expeditions into the Atlantic. Their purpose may well have been different from Cabot's, since he was seeking a new way to the wealth of Asia and intended to take possession of whatever territories he found, but his purpose would not be incompatible with the discovery, or rediscovery, of rich fishing grounds. Moreover, if Cabot opened up trade with lands across the Atlantic, it was to be channelled through Bristol. This view was thrown into the melting pot by the publication of Day's letter, written in the winter months of 1497-8 to the Almirante Mayor, generally agreed to be Columbus himself. This letter not only provided new evidence about John Cabot's voyage in 1497 and about an unsuccessful voyage by Cabot, which was not previously known, but also referred to an earlier discovery by men from Bristol. Referring to Cabot's voyage of 1497, Day said: 'It is considered certain that the cape of the said land was found and discovered in the past (*en otros tiempos*) by the men from Bristol who found "Brasil" as your Lordship well knows. It was called the Island of Brasil, and it is assumed and believed to be the mainland that the men from Bristol found.'²¹

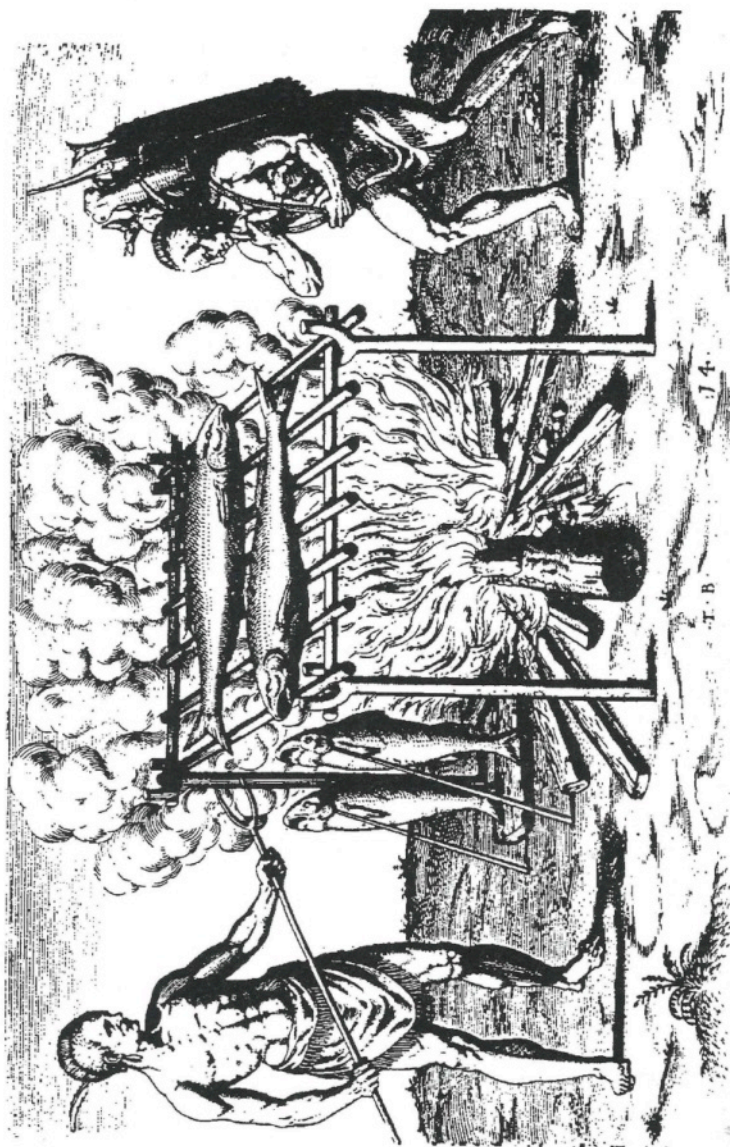
This letter, apart from an ambiguous statement made in 1527 by Robert Thorne about his father and Hugh Elyot,²² is the sole authority for the claim that men from Bristol had found land across the Atlantic before Cabot. It was therefore of vital importance to examine the credibility of the witness and he was eventually proved to be Hugh Say, mercer of London, who in the 1490s was operating from Bristol in the Iberian trade and who was in close touch with men who knew what was going on there.²³

These revelations make him a better witness than he would otherwise have been, but do not necessarily mean that what he said was right. He did not actually say that he himself knew that a discovery had been made or that he had talked to men who had been across the Atlantic before Cabot. He was apparently reporting what he had been told, and he did not say by whom 'it is considered certain'. Moreover, the statement would have carried greater weight if it had been made before and not after John Cabot's voyage of 1497. If, however, Day was right and there was a discovery before Cabot, questions naturally arise about when it was made and why it was not made public. Dr Ruddock argues that the discovery was made before 1480 but that the landfall was lost again in the Atlantic mist. Williamson thought it was made in the early 1490s but that it could have taken place in the early 1480s. He suggested that the reason why the discovery was not generally known was that until Cabot came home to announce that he had found a way to Asia 'few men outside Bristol were in the least interested in a new fishery worked from

that port'. Quinn sums up his own careful examination of the evidence with the comment: 'an argument on the present basis indicates that the English discovery could reasonably have taken place between 1481 and 1491 ... Further than this it would seem undesirable to go until something fresh can be adduced.' The case for a Bristol discovery of America certainly cannot be dismissed out of hand, but at present, in spite of John Day, it does not carry conviction.

There is very little information about the number of Bristolians involved in the Cabot voyages. According to John Day, Cabot made an unsuccessful voyage before 1497. Day wrote: 'he went with one ship, his crew confused him, he was short of supplies and ran into bad weather, and he decided to turn back'.²⁴ There is no other information about this early voyage, which may have taken place in 1490, and we do not know who put up the money for it or how much it cost. This is also true of the successful 1497 voyage. Cabot's patent entitled him to employ five ships of any tonnage,²⁵ but in fact he went in only one small ship with a company of eighteen or twenty people.²⁶ It is not unreasonable to assume that John Cabot would have preferred a larger expedition with two or more ships and that the reason why he did not get it was that insufficient funds were available. If this is so, it suggests that there was no rush among Bristolians to invest in the voyage. The patent had been granted to Cabot and his sons, and to their deputies. J.A. Williamson suggested that 'these may include the Bristol merchants known by other evidence to have been associated with them',²⁷ but this is only conjecture. It is not possible to name any Bristol merchant who can be clearly shown to have invested in the expedition. It was, in any case, a very small one, and the amount of capital cannot have been very large.

For John Cabot's voyage in 1498, larger resources were available, but this was not primarily because there were now many Bristolians ready to put their money into a project which looked very promising. The largest ship in the 1498 voyage was sent by the King himself, who provided the ship and the crew but not the cargo.²⁸ Williamson suggested that the King hired for the occasion a private merchantman belonging to Lancelot Thirkill and his partner, two London men, at a cost of £113 8s 0d, and that she was just under 200 tons in burden.²⁹ She was accompanied by four small ships from Bristol, and the cargo for the voyage was provided by 'dyvers merchauntes aswell of London as Bristow'.³⁰ It was, then, an expedition financed by the King and London merchants as well as some Bristol merchants, and this again may be an indication that Bristolians were unable or unwilling to make a really large-scale investment.



'The broiling of their Fish over the Flames' - engraving of East Coast natives of Virginia by Theodore de Bry

The Cabot voyages of 1497 and 1498 must have been very disappointing from the point of view of investors, and this may help to explain why even in Bristol the role which John Cabot had played in exploration was for a long time forgotten and his son Sebastian was able to take credit for his father's achievements. Nevertheless, at least a few Bristolians retained an interest in exploration in the first decade of the sixteenth century. This interest was closely related to the explorations being carried out by the Portuguese.³¹ In 1501, a patent for exploration was granted to Richard Warde, Thomas Asshehurst, and John Thomas, merchants of Bristol³² and to João Fernandes, Francisco Fernandes, and João Gonsalves of the Azores. Under this patent, there were voyages of exploration in 1501 and 1502. In January 1502 the King's Household Book records the following: 'Item to men of bristoll that founde thisle, Cs',³³ and in September 'to the merchauntes of bristoll that have bene in the newe founde laund, xx li'.³⁴ Williamson pointed out that this group was not allowed to intrude on the discoveries made by the Cabot family, whose patent was still valid, and he suggested that there may have been another voyage in 1502 by Cabot's deputies, among whom may have been Robert Thorne and Hugh Elyot.³⁵

Yet another patent was granted on 9 December 1502, this time to Thomas Asshehurst and Hugh Elyot, their heirs and deputies, and to João Gonsalves and Francisco Fernandes.³⁶ Williamson suggested that what may have happened was that the rights under the Cabot patent were now merged with the privileges granted to this new group in 1502.³⁷ The group came to be known as 'the Company adventurers in to the new fownde ilondes'.³⁸ Voyages were sent out in 1503, 1504, and 1505.³⁹ Williamson suggested that the purpose was to discover a northwest passage to Asia and that one or more colonial settlements were founded.⁴⁰

In these ventures of the early sixteenth century others besides Bristolians were involved, including Portuguese from the Azores, William Clerk, a London merchant, and to some extent, Sir Bartholomew Rede, a London goldsmith.⁴¹ The initiative may well have come from the Azoreans and some of the capital from London. Only about half a dozen Bristolians can be shown to have participated, and we do not know how much they invested.⁴² As Williamson put it, 'the north-western push by the Bristol syndicate died out in the icefields. So also did that by the Portuguese. Later history shows that unless success came quickly, lack of money closed the effort.'⁴³

As Quinn points out, these voyages are of considerable significance,⁴⁴ but they failed to produce dividends for the investors. It was not

therefore surprising that although the little group of Bristol merchants associated during part or whole of the period 1480-1505 with western voyages had a long trading life, there is nothing to show that, from 1505 to 1525 at least, any of them had any concern with America or with voyages in that direction.⁴⁵ Merchants were not concerned with gaining a place in the histories of exploration, but with receiving a return on their capital. From this point of view, the early voyages of the sixteenth century must have been a complete loss.

It may be suggested that against this loss we should put on the credit side of the ledger the profits made from the Newfoundland fisheries. It has been argued that it was the need to find a new source of supply of cod that led Bristolians to cross the Atlantic in the first place, and the accounts of Cabot's voyage in 1497 stress the richness of the fisheries he discovered. Thus, in December 1497 the Milanese representative in England reported that those who had been on the expedition remarked that 'the sea there is swarming with fish, which can be taken not only with the net, but in baskets let down with a stone ...';⁴⁶ and John Day reported that 'all along the coast they found many fish like those which in Iceland are dried in the open and sold in England and other countries'.⁴⁷ But if Bristolians discovered the fisheries, they did not apparently exploit them. S.E. Morison remarks that though Prowse, the historian of Newfoundland, asserted that West Country English were fishing off Newfoundland as early as 1498 this was pure conjecture.⁴⁸ Elsewhere, he writes: 'Bristol supported Cabot and the Anglo-Azorean syndicate, partly to find new fishing grounds; but when found, they were neglected. Rut found not one English fisherman in St John's in 1527; and Roberval, if any of the fishing fleets he encountered there were English, did not admit it.'⁴⁹ It may be that the Portuguese established themselves first and that, as a result, from the point of view of the English the need was less great than expected and the profit smaller. Bristolians and other Englishmen were to exploit the fisheries later in the century, as were the French and other nations, but this would not be of any great comfort to those who invested their money in exploration in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

There remains for consideration one more voyage in the first decade of the sixteenth century about which there is a good deal of uncertainty, that of Sebastian Cabot in 1508-9. Morison thought that Sebastian Cabot's supposed voyage in 1508 in search of a northwest passage 'belongs in the doubtful class' and that the only voyage that Sebastian certainly commanded was in 1525-8 in the service of the King of Spain.⁵⁰ Williamson, however, maintained that the voyage did take place,

and Quinn states that this is now generally accepted.⁵¹ The question remains how far Bristolians were involved.

It is known that Sebastian Cabot was living in Bristol in 1505 when the King gave him a pension of £10 a year in consideration of diligent service in and about the town and port of Bristol,⁵² but there is nothing to show that this had anything to do with exploration. Williamson pointed out that Sebastian and his brothers were inheritors of the Cabot patent, which was still uncanceled, and that the adventurers who got a patent in 1502 were also free to operate in the areas covered by the Cabot patent. He suggested that 'there may have been a fusion of interests between the Cabot patentees and the Company'. Although we lose sight of the Company after 1506, there is no proof that it ceased to operate. Williamson added: 'There is therefore a possibility that all this Bristol interest was behind Sebastian Cabot two years later. His voyage can have been an effort of the Company Adventurers. ... It is a testimonial to Sebastian Cabot's reputation that Bristol and the King provided the money to equip him, for we may be certain that he did not find it all himself.'⁵³ This is going far beyond the evidence. Williamson himself must have had doubts, for he hastened to add: 'the above remarks on the Bristol support given to Cabot are speculative'.⁵⁴ In the present state of knowledge we cannot be sure that Sebastian Cabot sailed from Bristol, or that whatever mercantile interests were involved were Bristol mercantile interests. Quinn sums up by saying: 'How much relevance Sebastian Cabot's voyage had for Bristol is not known.'⁵⁵

From 1508-9 until Frobisher's voyages of 1570-8, there is very little evidence that Bristol was interested in voyages of exploration, although during his lifetime Cabot maintained connections with the city. He left Bristol and moved to London and then took service with the King of Spain, but in 1521 he visited England and secured the backing of Henry VIII, Wolsey, and the Council for 'a viage to be made into the newefound Iland'.⁵⁶ This was to be a London-based expedition, but 'as many Cites and Townes as be mynded to prepare any shippes forwardes for the same purpos & viage' might co-operate under the control of the City of London, and, according to the Drapers' Company records, 'the Towne of Bristowe hath sent up there knowledge, that they wyll prepare ij shippes ...'.⁵⁷ It is reasonable to assume that Sebastian Cabot had been in touch with Bristol and may even have visited it. The plan met with opposition from some of the Londoners and in the end came to nothing. Quinn comments that 'there is nothing in the local records to show why this did not lead to an independent Bristol venture' and suggests that Cabot abandoned the idea because, after the major London companies

showed their lack of enthusiasm, only a small London-Bristol venture was practicable, and this was not enough for him.⁵⁸ We do not know who in Bristol promised to provide the two ships or how serious they were. It is possible that there was in fact no great enthusiasm in Bristol, but that in reply to a pressing invitation from the king and council, the city government had expressed a willingness to co-operate without going into details about who was to provide the ships. When the grandiose scheme collapsed because of lack of large-scale support in London, Bristolians may well have been reluctant, in view of their previous experience, to go it alone.

Sebastian Cabot returned to England in 1549 and was for a time in Bristol, but he left for London in the same year, and was engaged in plans for the discovery of Cathay which led in 1553 to the voyage of Willoughby and Chancellor. This was a London-backed venture, and, as Quinn remarks, Bristol 'played no part in the northerly passage ventures with which Sebastian Cabot's English career reaches a late climax'.⁵⁹

Bristol's lack of involvement in voyages of exploration in the second half of the sixteenth century cannot be explained solely in terms of the state of her overseas trade. She was not as prosperous as she had been in the later fifteenth century, but she was doing reasonably well and there were signs of expansion in the 1530s.⁶⁰ Part of the explanation for her lack of interest may be that her experience of overseas ventures in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century had shown that such investments were not profitable. In addition, there is a possibility that some of the small groups of Bristolians who were interested in America found that they could best develop this interest not from Bristol itself but from Spain. Something must therefore be said about these men, even though what they did should be seen as the work of men who originally came from Bristol or who had Bristol connections rather than as strictly Bristol ventures.

A good deal is now known about the English merchants who resided in Spain in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁶¹ The group included Robert Thorne the elder and his sons Robert and Nicholas, and Roger Barlow, who in 1533 became a freeman of Bristol by marriage.⁶² Both Robert Thorne and Roger Barlow were keenly interested in exploration. They had been deeply involved in Sebastian Cabot's voyage of 1525-8 in the service of the King of Spain⁶³ and both had tried to arouse English interest in voyages of discovery.⁶⁴ Others who were Bristolians or who were connected with Bristol included Thomas Howell, William Ostriche, governor of the Andalusian Company, and Henry Patmer who accompanied Roger Barlow on the Cabot voyage in 1526.⁶⁵ The group

of men with Bristol connections resident in Spain was admittedly very small, but it was influential, and under certain conditions these men were free to trade directly with the Spanish territories in the New World. E.G.R. Taylor noted that

‘the generation reaching manhood early in the sixteenth century, who were the contemporaries and friends of the Barlow brothers, included Robert Thorne the younger and his brother Nicholas, both of whom had grown up in an atmosphere of adventure and high expectation. As children they must have seen John Cabot in their father’s company, and they knew his son Sebastian first of all in Bristol and later in Seville, where they went to take over their father’s business after his death in 1518-19.’⁶⁶

It is possible, then, that the more enterprising members of the small group of Bristol merchants who were interested in the New World decided that it would be better to leave Bristol and pursue their interest from London or from Spain itself, leaving their less adventurous brethren to continue with their customary trades.

Bristol’s lack of involvement across the Atlantic continued to manifest itself during the age of Elizabeth I, and only on two occasions did the city show a flicker of interest. The three voyages of Martin Frobisher in search of a northwest passage between 1576 and 1578 aroused some excitement because some of the ships were fitted out in Bristol and some of the ore, which was thought to be gold-bearing, was brought back there and assayed.⁶⁷ In addition, Bristolians had an opportunity of seeing two Eskimos. A local chronicler noted:

‘They brought likewise a man called Callichio, and a woman called Ignorth: they were savage people and fed only upon raw flesh. The 9th of October he rowed in a little boat made of skin in the water at the Backe, where he killed 2 ducks with a dart, and when he had done carried his boat through the marsh upon his back: the like he did at the weir and other places where many beheld him. He could hit a duck a good distance off and not miss. They died within a month.’⁶⁸

The expeditions, however, were primarily London-based and London-financed, and the investment of Bristolians was minimal. C.M. MacInnes maintained that ‘in the promoting of these voyages Bristol merchants were deeply concerned ...’,⁶⁹ but the only known Bristol investors were Thomas Chester, Thomas Kelke, Thomas Aldworth, and Robert Halton, each of whom put up £25 for the second voyage.⁷⁰ Since the total

investment in the three voyages was estimated to be £20,345,⁷¹ the modest £100 from Bristol does not suggest any deep commitment.

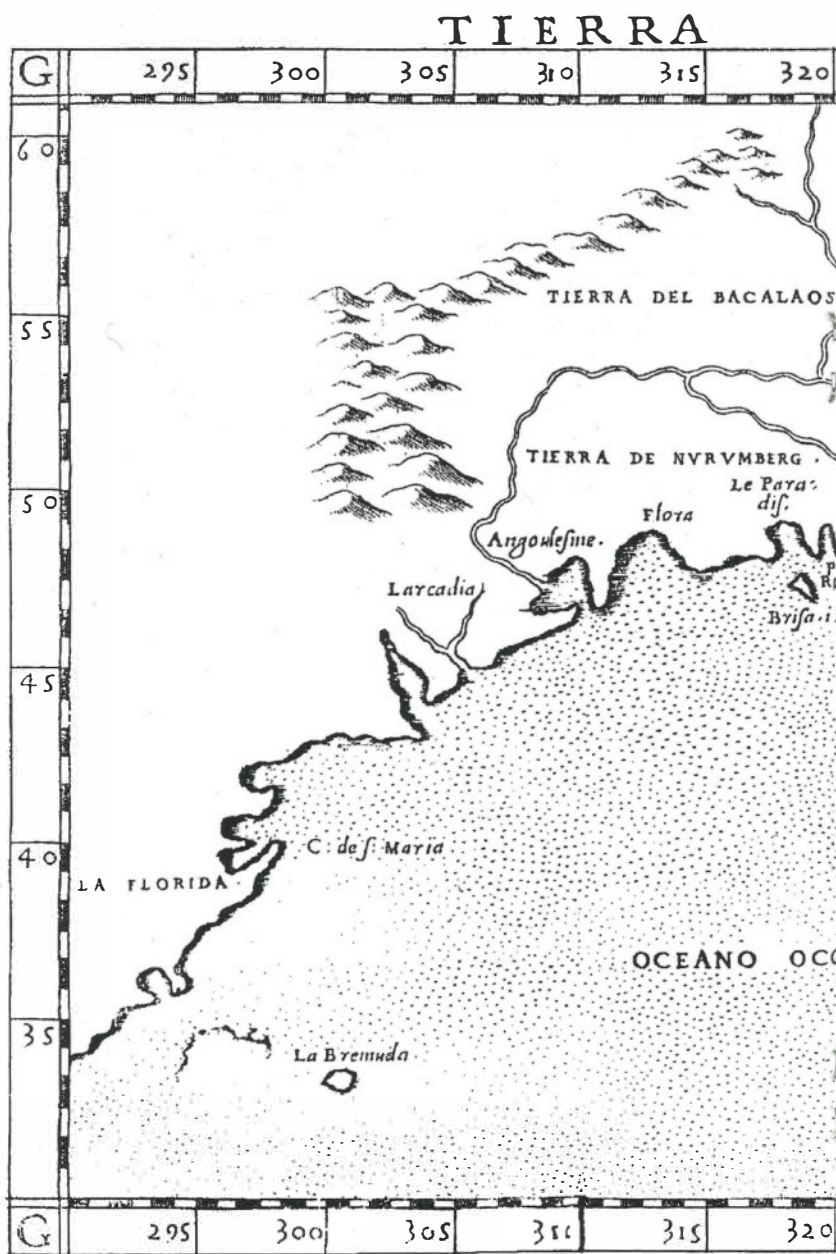
The only other occasion on which Bristolians showed an interest in exploration and colonization across the Atlantic in the second half of the sixteenth century was in relation to Sir Humphrey Gilbert's activities in 1582-3. In March 1583 Sir Francis Walsingham wrote to Thomas Aldworth, merchant and mayor of Bristol, referring to a letter which Aldworth had written to him in November 1582.⁷² Walsingham wrote:

'Your good inclination to the Western discoverie I cannot but much commend. And for that Sir Humphrey Gilbert, as you have heard long since, hath bene preparing into those parts being readie to imbarke there 10 dayes, who needeth some further supply of shipping then yet he hath, I am of opinion that you shall do well if the ship or 2 barkes you write of, be put in a readinesse to goe alongst with him, or so soone after as you may ...,'

and he asked Aldworth to confer with the bearers of the letter, Richard Hakluyt and Thomas Steventon.⁷³ Thomas Aldworth replied on 27 March, saying that on receipt of these letters 'I presently conferred with my friends in private, whom I know most affectionate to this godly enterprise, especially with M. William Salterne deputie of our company of merchants'.⁷⁴ Since Aldworth himself was sick, Salterne had 'with as convenient speede as he could ... caused an assembly of the merchants to be gathered'. Walsingham's letters were read out, and

'after some good light given by M. Hakluyt unto them that were ignorant of the Countrey and enterprise, and were desirous to be resolved, the motion grew generally so well to be liked, that there was eftsoones set downe by mens owne hands then present, and apparently knowen by their owne speach, and very willing offer, the summe of 1000 markes and upward: which summe if it should not suffice, we doubt not but otherwise to furnish out for this Western discovery, a ship of threescore, and a barke of 40 tunne, to bee left in the countrey under the direction and government of your sonne in law M. Carlile ...'

Aldworth asked Walsingham to send further instructions 'to my selfe, my brethren, and the rest of the merchants of this city, at your honors best and most convenient leisure, because we meane not to deferre the finall proceeding in this voyage, any further then to the end of April next coming'.⁷⁵



*The New World (Tierra Nueva). Map by
the shores seen by Jacques Cartier on his*

N V E V A



Gastaldi, first published in 1548, showing first voyage to the Canadian Coast in 1534.

There are a number of puzzling features about this episode which are discussed by Quinn. Walsingham's letter suggests that the first move came from the Bristol merchants, but there is a possibility that the initiative was in fact taken by Walsingham or Hakluyt or both.⁷⁶ It is also possible that Walsingham and Christopher Carleill were double-crossing Sir Humphrey Gilbert and withholding information about the Bristol offer in order that Bristol support should be channelled in the direction of a scheme proposed by Carleill which, it was hoped, would also be backed by the Muscovy Company. In the end, nothing came of Carleill's project, and Bristolians were not required to contribute the 1000 marks or more which they had undertaken to find.⁷⁷

A modest contribution of £100 towards Frobisher's second voyage and a declaration of intent to provide 1000 marks for Christopher Carleill's proposed venture do not suggest that there was great interest among Bristolians in exploration and colonization during the Elizabethan period. Whether this was related to the prosperity of Bristol trade in general, we cannot say. Jean Vanes has suggested that, except in the mid-century and the 1560s, the economy of Bristol was not as depressed as used to be thought,⁷⁸ and the failure of the city to participate fully in Elizabethan exploration cannot be explained solely in terms of lack of resources.⁷⁹

In the early seventeenth century, Bristol had a bigger contribution to make. How far this was due to a modest expansion in her overseas trade, to the enthusiasm of particular individuals or to pressure from outside is again difficult to say. A few days before the death of Elizabeth I, Martin Pring sailed from Bristol with the *Speedwell* of about 50 tons and a crew of 30, and the *Discoverer* of 26 tons with 13 men and a boy on a voyage to Virginia.⁸⁰ In his account of the expedition, Pring stated that it was 'a voyage set out from the Citie of Bristoll at the charge of the chieffest Merchants and Inhabitants of the said Citie with a small ship and a Barke for the farther discoverie of the North part of Virginia', and that it was undertaken 'upon many probable and reasonable inducements, used unto sundry of the chieffest Merchants of Bristoll, by Master Richard Hakluyt ... after divers meeting and due consultation'. Robert Aldworth and John Whitson, two of the leading merchants in Bristol, were the 'chief furtherers', and in all about £1,000 was raised. Robert Salterne of Bristol, who went with the expedition, had sailed from Falmouth to explore Virginia in the previous year. We do not know how many Bristolians put money into the venture or whether the bulk of the capital was provided by the 'chief furtherers'. Pring planted wheat, rye, and other crops, and carried out some exploration and trade in furs. At

the end of July, the *Discoverer* was loaded with sassafras and sent home 'to give some speedie contentment to the Adventurers'.⁸¹ She had been away 5 months. The *Speedwell* returned a fortnight later. Whether the adventurers did receive 'some speedie contentment' with the results of an expedition which had lasted six months, we do not know, but the venture cannot have been very profitable, and Aldworth and Whitson may have felt that they paid a high price for having their names given to a hill and a bay.⁸²

The expedition of Martin Pring seems to have been a spontaneous Bristol venture, but the next occasion on which Bristolians were involved with America was the result of persuasion and pressure from outside. Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Lord Chief Justice Popham, who both had Bristol connections, were interested in settlement in North America at the time when the Virginia Company was in process of formation, and they endeavoured to get support from Bristol.⁸³ The initial response was not enthusiastic. The minutes of the Common Council of Bristol record that on 12 March 1606 the Lord Chief Justice's letter was read 'touchynge the plantacion in Virginia' and that those present 'were all of opynyon not to adventure any thinge in that action unless yt shall please the Kinges Majestie to undertake the same and to Ioyne in that chardge. And then they will be contributory and adventure in some reasonable proportion.'⁸⁴ In April 1606, there was rather more enthusiasm. In the Common Council minutes for 1 April, there is a list of members of the Council who expressed willingness to make contributions for five years, and there is a memorandum that Thomas Hopkins and Thomas Aldworth, merchants, were appointed to confer with the inhabitants of Bristol and to certify what every man would advance towards 'this action of Virginia'.⁸⁵ Fourteen out of the forty-four members of the Council undertook to provide yearly contributions amounting to £90 for five years.⁸⁶ Whether any of the other inhabitants agreed to contribute, we do not know, nor have we any evidence that the members Common Council paid over the money. Expeditions were sent out in 1606 and 1607 and for a short time a colony was established in 'Northern Virginia', but it was not successful and the settlers returned home.⁸⁷

A number of Bristolians were also concerned in the attempt to plant a colony in Newfoundland. In letters patent of 1610, James I established a company to be known as 'The Treasurer and the Company of the City of London and Bristol for the Colony of Plantations in Newfoundland'.⁸⁸ Of the forty-eight members named in the Charter, eleven, including John Guy, were Bristolians, and seven of these at various times held high office in the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers.⁸⁹ It is not

absolutely clear whether it was London or Bristol which took the initiative in establishing the Newfoundland Company. A Bristol chronicle with proper local pride stressed the role of the Bristol merchant John Guy:

‘Also this year Mr. John Guy merchant (being one of the Councill of Bristoll) Intended a Plantation in the Newfoundland, and had gotten a Licence and Charter of the King for the same, having some Rich Merchants of London joined with him for the better Fraying of the charge and bringing it to Pass: and likewise many of this city did put in their Moneys hoping to reap Benefitt in the End, and so Mr Guy with some other Young Merchants (having fitted themselves with Men and other things necessary) took shipping for Newfoundland to make a Triale of the Place by staying there all the winter ...’⁹⁰

Gillian Cell is also inclined to give Bristol the credit for the idea. She writes:

‘The Bristol subscribers could not but be aware that their city, traditionally linked with the island since the time of John Cabot if not before, now lagged behind the other lesser ports in the exploitation of the fishery. A chartered company, combining local know-how and London wealth, might be the means of restoring Bristol’s lost eminence. Bristol’s contribution, perhaps of inspiration and certainly of knowledge, was amply recognised in the Company’s title which proclaimed the partnership of the two cities.’⁹¹

T.K. Rabb calls the Company ‘the one major undertaking of the period whose inspiration appears to have come from Bristol merchants’.⁹² About the role of John Guy, there is, of course, no doubt, but the extent of commitment by Bristolians in general is less clear. The original forty-eight members subscribed £25 for a share, although it is possible that they could purchase more than one share.⁹³ The eleven Bristol subscribers would have bought themselves in by a total payment of £275,⁹⁴ and as Cell has shown, in the end ‘most of the capital and the work of organisation’ came from Londoners, and members of the Company’s Council were required by the charter to reside in London.⁹⁵ It may be that the pioneer work of the Bristolian John Guy has given to the merchant community as a whole a reputation which it did not deserve. The venture met with temporary success and resulted in settlement and exploration, but it ran into serious difficulties and there is no record of the settlement after the late 1620s.⁹⁶

Related to the Newfoundland colony was another attempted settlement by Bristolians. The Newfoundland Company had insufficient funds and tried to raise capital by selling land to private developers.⁹⁷ Of the five grants which it made, one was to a group of Bristol merchants. The Society of Merchant Venturers Book of Charters records under the year 1618: 'Alsoe this yeere Divers particuler marchants of this Society Didd sett Forwardes the plantacion of a porcion of Land in the Country of Newfoundland called Bristolls Hope, which was graunted and confirmed vnto them, by the Treasouror and Company of the Cittyes of London and Bristoll For the Colonie or Plantacion in Newfoundland ...',⁹⁸ but the settlement was abandoned after a few years.

Bristol was again involved in North American affairs between 1621 and 1623. In 1620 there had been incorporated a Company of New England governed by the 'Council established at Plymouth, in the County of Devon, for the planting, ruling, ordering, and governing of New England in America'. This Company tried to encourage various West Country towns to establish local groups for colonization, and it also had extensive control over the fisheries. On 18 September 1621, the Privy Council wrote to the mayors of Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, and other West Country towns pointing out that although the Company had offered membership to merchants and others, some persons who had not joined were nevertheless continuing to go to New England to trade or to fish, and this practice was to stop. The mayor sent this letter to the Society of Merchant Venturers together with a letter from Sir Ferdinando Gorges concerning the proposed formation of subsidiary companies for colonization in Bristol, Exeter, and other towns. There was apparently no enthusiasm for the proposal in Bristol, but on the other hand the merchants were anxious that if any individual wanted to go on a fishing voyage, he should be allowed to do so on reasonable terms. A number of Bristol merchants wrote to the Bristol MPs, John Whitson and John Guy, asking them to examine the Company's patent rights. If these were as wide as the Company claimed, then some Merchant Venturers would agree to accept the best terms they could get for licences to fish. In 1623 the Company once more tried to persuade West Country merchants to invest in colonization and the King wrote to the Earl of Pembroke asking him to use his influence. Pembroke sent a letter to the mayor of Bristol on 13 December 1623 urging him to be active in the matter, but there was apparently no enthusiasm in Bristol, whose merchants were concerned not with colonization but with getting the best terms they could for licences to fish.⁹⁹

In 1631, the voyage of the *Henrietta Maria* in search of a northwest passage brought to an end the series of explorations backed by Bristolians which had begun over a hundred and fifty years earlier. The incentive was the fact that London merchants were preparing an expedition, and there was anxiety in Bristol lest Londoners should secure yet another monopoly. What eventually emerged in 1631 were two expeditions: that of Captain Luke Foxe in the *Charles* from London and that of Captain Thomas James from Bristol in a ship which was renamed for the occasion the *Henrietta Maria*. She was a ship of 70 tons provisioned for eighteen months.¹⁰⁰ The Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol was very interested in the project, and a number of letters relating to it are found in its Book of Trade,¹⁰¹ but the main cost was borne not by the Society, which had very limited funds, but by the individual merchants concerned in the voyage. The Society guaranteed the wages of all who went on the expedition and seems to have paid out £181 18s 1d.¹⁰² We do not know the total cost, but in February 1631 a letter from John Barker, Richard Longe, John Tayler, and Giles Elbridge stated that about £800 had been subscribed to date.¹⁰³ Humphrey Hooke, Andrew Charlton, Miles Jackson, and Thomas Cole are also known to have been involved,¹⁰⁴ and there may, of course, have been others. The failure of the expedition meant that there were additional names on the list of Bristolians who had burnt their fingers financing voyages of exploration.

Writing about investment in English overseas enterprises between 1575 and 1630, Rabb has commented on 'the sheer magnitude of popular involvement' and remarked that 'without the backing of thousands of obscure people the great successes could never have been achieved'.¹⁰⁵ Such comments could hardly be applied to Bristol in these years, and, indeed, as far as the whole period 1480-1631 is concerned, the admittedly limited evidence suggests that investment in such enterprises was the work of a very small number of men and that it was very modest. This does not, of course, mean that certain Bristolians do not deserve an important place in the history of exploration and colonization. It could also be argued that the contacts with America between 1480 and 1631 established traditions and attitudes which were helpful in the second half of the century when the city became the port of embarkation for thousands of Englishmen emigrating across the Atlantic¹⁰⁶ and built up a very important trade with the West Indies and America.¹⁰⁷ Although this, like the exploitation of the cod fisheries, might have been possible even if no explorers or settlers had sailed from Bristol in the period 1480-1631, it may be that the small band of pioneers and investors helped in the long run to win for their city dividends which they failed to obtain for themselves.

Addendum

Patrick McGrath missed Alwyn Ruddock's paper of 1974 which showed that Sebastian Cabot owed his 1505 pension to his activities in Newfoundland. It is reprinted in D.B. Quinn, *Sebastian Cabot and Bristol Exploration*, revised edition (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1993), pp. 34-37.

There is a new study and edition of the Pring voyage of 1603 in D.B. and A.M. Quinn, eds., *The English New England Voyages 1602-1608* (Hakluyt Society, 1987), with a few details on Bristol's investment in the North Virginia voyage and intended colony in 1606.

For the Guy colony in 1610 etc. Gillian T. Cell, ed., *Newfoundland Discovered 1610-1630* (Hakluyt Society, 1982) is invaluable. Her earlier general book, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland 1577-1660* (University of Toronto Press, 1969), is not mentioned (although her earlier thesis is) by Patrick McGrath.

D.B. Quinn
January 1996

PARTE INCOGNITA



New France (Nuova Francia) from Ramusio's collection of Voyages and Travels (1556).



The source of this map appears to be the voyage of Giovanni de Verrazzano in 1524

References

1. J.A. Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII* (Cambridge 1962), pp. 19-20, 187-8 (hereafter cited as *Cabot Voyages*); D.B. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America 1481-1620* (London, 1974), pp. 7-8 (hereafter cited as Quinn, *Discovery*).
2. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 22-23, 188-9; Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 54-58; W.E.C. Harrison, 'An early voyage of discovery', *Mariner's Mirror*, xvi (1930), 198-9; D.B. Quinn, 'Edward IV and exploration', *ibid.* xxi (1935), 275-84. For the licence to Thomas Croft, William Spencer, Robert Strange, and Willam de la Fount, merchants of Bristol, to trade for three years to any parts, except with staple goods, with two or three ships of 60 tons or under, see E.M. Carus-Wilson, *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages* (Bristol, 1936), pp. 157-8. The licence is probably, but not certainly, related to the attempt at exploration.
3. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 228-9, 233-4; Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 9-10.
4. Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 14; Alwyn A. Ruddock, 'John Day of Bristol and the English voyages across the Atlantic before 1497', *Geographical Journal*, cxxxii (1966), 225-33 (hereafter cited as Ruddock, 'John Day').
5. Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 56-57.
6. We might never have heard of the voyage of 1480 if William Worcestre had not been interested as a relative of the Jay family, and we would not know of the 1481 voyage if Thomas Croft had not been a Customer of Bristol and laid himself open to the charge of being engaged in trade.
7. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 19, 187-8.
8. See n. 2.
9. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, p. 20.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-29, 202. It is not clear what Robert Thorne meant and when the discovery was supposed to have been made.
11. See Quinn, *Discovery*, chap. 3, 'England and the Atlantic'.
12. James Sherborne, *The Port of Bristol in the Middle Ages* (Bristol, 1971), p. 27 (hereafter cited as Sherborne). In 1545, 111 merchants and traders paid the subsidy, of whom about three-quarters paid on £10 or more (Jean Vanes, 'The overseas trade of Bristol in the sixteenth century', London Ph.D. thesis, 1975, p. 56: hereafter cited as Vanes).
13. T.F. Reddaway and A.A. Ruddock (eds), 'The accounts of John Balsall, purser of the *Trinity* of Bristol', *Camden Miscellany* xxiii (1969), 1-26; Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 54-55.
14. Sherborne, p. 28.
15. See, however, Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 87.
16. Ruddock, 'John Day'.
17. For Bristol's relations with Iceland, see Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 30, 47-50, 53-54, 56, 86, 105; E.M. Carus-Wilson, *Mediaeval Merchant Venturers* (London, 1954), chap. 2, 'The Icelandic Venture'.
18. Ruddock, 'John Day', p. 230.
19. Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 14.
20. L.A. Vigneras, 'New light on the 1497 Cabot voyage to America', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, xxxvi (1956), 503-9 (hereafter cited as Vigneras [1956]) has the text

- in Spanish; L.A. Vigneras, 'The Cape Breton landfall: 1494 or 1497? Note on a letter by John Day', *Canadian Historical Review*, xxxviii (1957), 219-28 (hereafter cited as Vigneras [1957]) has an English translation. Another translation occurs in S.E. Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (New York and London, 1971; hereafter cited as Morison).
21. Vigneras (1957), p. 228. The translation in Morison, pp. 208-9, reads: 'It is considered certain that this same point of land at another time was found and discovered by those of Bristol who found *el Brasil* as you are already aware, which is called Ysla de Brasil, and is presumed and believed to be the *tierra firma* which those of Bristol discovered.'
 22. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 26-29, 202.
 23. Ruddock, 'John Day'.
 24. Williamson *Cabot Voyages*, p. 213; see also *ibid.*, p. 54 for a suggestion that *la gente que llevaba le desconcerto* might mean 'he had a disagreement with his crew'.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
 26. Raimondo de Raimondi de Soncino to the Duke of Milan, 18 December 1497, printed in Williamson, *Cabot Voyages* p. 209. John Day gives the number as 20.
 27. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, p. 51.
 28. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92, 220-3.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
 30. For the evidence of the London chronicles relating to this expedition, see *ibid.*, pp. 220-3. Cabot's patent of 1498 entitled him to take six ships provided they were under 200 tons: *ibid.*, pp. 226-7.
 31. For the Portuguese explorations, see Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, chap. 8, 'Bristol and the new found land', pp. 116-44; Quinn, *Discovery* pp. 111-17.
 32. The petition and grant are printed in Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 235-47; see Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 113-14, for a suggestion of why the Azoreans came to Bristol.
 33. Printed in Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, p. 215.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 216. See Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 117-18 for these two voyages.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-2. There is, of course, no direct evidence to show that Asshehurst and Elyot were Cabot's 'deputies'.
 36. Printed in Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 250-61.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-4; Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 121.
 38. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, p. 263.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 136; see also Quinn, *Discovery* pp. 123-6.
 41. Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 122-3. The later history of the group was not happy and may have discouraged such associations in the future. See Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 262-4.
 42. In the conclusion to her thesis Vanes says that it is tempting to ascribe the decline in Bristol's trade in the first decade of the sixteenth century to 'the squandering of resources on voyages of exploration', but it cannot be shown that large resources were so squandered or that many Bristolians were involved.
 43. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, p. 144.
 44. Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 120-30.
 45. Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 128.

46. Printed in Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, p. 210.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.
48. Morison, p. 225.
49. Morison, p. 471; on the cod fisheries, *ibid.*, pp. 225-8 and 470-8; also Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 144. In 1540-1, Roger Barlow referred to 'the new founde lande, which was fyrst discouered by marchantes of brystowe where now the bretons do trat thither everie yere a fyshing', Roger Barlow, *A Briefe Summe of Geographie*, ed. E.G.R. Taylor (London, 1932), p. 179 (hereafter cited as Taylor, *Barlow*). In 1576 it was estimated that thirty English ships went there, Gillian T. Cell, 'The Newfoundland Company: A study of subscribers to a colonizing venture', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, xxii (1965), 612 (hereafter cited as Cell, 'Subscribers'): see also Gillian T. Cell, 'The English in Newfoundland, 1577-1660' (Liverpool University Ph.D. thesis, 1964), pp. 51-52 (hereafter cited as Cell, 'English in Newfoundland').
50. Morison, pp. 220-1.
51. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 145-72; Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 131-59; see also D.B. Quinn, *Sebastian Cabot and Bristol Exploration* (Bristol, 1968).
52. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, p. 265.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-2.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
55. Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 143.
56. For details of the proposed expedition given in the records of the Drapers' Company of London, see Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, pp. 286-91.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
58. Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 147.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
60. For Bristol trade in the sixteenth century, see Vanes.
61. G. Connell-Smith, 'English merchants trading to the New World in the early sixteenth century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxiii (1950), 53-67 (hereafter cited as Connell-Smith, 'Merchants'); G. Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake* (London, 1954, hereafter cited as Connell-Smith, *Forerunners*). See also Taylor, *Barlow*; and Vanes, p. 347 ff.
62. Quinn, *Discovery*, p. 149, n. 2.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
64. Connell-Smith, 'Merchants', pp. 57-58; *Forerunners*, p. 10; see also Morison, pp. 233-7, for Robert Thorne's letter and John Rut's voyage.
65. Connell-Smith, *Forerunners*, pp. 10, 65, 66-68.
66. Taylor, *Barlow*, p. xxii.
67. For the expeditions, see R. Collinson (ed.), *The Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher* (London, 1867; hereafter cited as Collinson); V. Stefansson (ed.), *The Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher* (London, 1938).
68. Francis F. Fox (ed.), *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol* (Bristol, 1910), p. 115.
69. C.M. MacInnes, *A Gateway of Empire* (Bristol, 1939), p. 56 (hereafter cited as MacInnes, *Gateway*).
70. Collinson, p. 109.
71. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

72. Aldworth's letter has not survived and we know of it only from Walsingham's letter.
73. Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (12 vols, Glasgow, 1903-5), viii. 132 (hereafter cited as *Principal Navigations*).
74. This does not appear to be a reference to the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol. See Patrick McGrath, *The Merchant Venturers of Bristol* (Bristol, 1975), p. 21.
75. *Principal Navigations*, viii. 133-4.
76. D.B. Quinn (ed.), *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert* (London, 1940), pp. 76-81 (hereafter cited as Quinn, *Gilbert*).
77. In May 1583, a committee of the Muscovy Company estimated the cost at £4,000 and reported 'One thowsande poundes whereof hathe ben verie readilie offered by the Cittie of Bristoll, the residewe beinge three thowsande poundes remaineth to be furnished by this Cittie of London', Quinn, *Gilbert*, p. 366.
78. Vanes, *passim*.
79. As Andrews has shown, some capital was available in Bristol for privateering, and some merchants got a satisfactory return on their capital, but this is at least partly to be explained in terms of employing in privateering ships which would in peace time have been used in the Iberian trade: K.R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 32-33, 125-6, 141, 144, 146, 229, 258-61, 271.
80. For this voyage, see Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (20 vols, Glasgow, 1905-7), xviii. 322-9 (hereafter cited as Purchas); MacInnes, *Gateway*, pp. 69-70.
81. Purchas, xviii. 328.
82. For an account of the voyage, see Quinn, *Discovery*, pp. 423-7. Pring named a small bay Whitson Bay and one of the hills Mount Aldworth.
83. For Gorges, see R.A. Preston, *Gorges of Plymouth Fort* (Toronto, 1953); C.M. MacInnes, *Ferdinando Gorges and New England* (Bristol, 1965).
84. Bristol Record Office: Common Council Proceedings 1598-1608, p. 114. Twenty-six members of the Council were present out of a total of 44.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 115, 1 April 1606.
86. Thomas James, mayor, 20 marks a year for five years; William Hickes, 40s; William Ellis, £3; John Hopkins, £12 10s; John Rowbero and John Guy, 20 marks each; Robert Aldworth, £12 10s; John Boulton, William Cole, £5; Robert Rogers, £3; Arthur Needes, £3.
87. John Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (Bristol, 1900), pp. 27-28.
88. The letters patent are printed in C.T. Carr (ed.), *Select Charters of Trading Companies* (London, 1913), pp. 51-62; for the formation of the company, see Cell, 'English in Newfoundland', pp. 123-5.
89. Patrick McGrath (ed.), *Records relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (Bristol, 1951), p. 199. The Bristol members were Matthew Haviland, Thomas Aldworth, William Lewes, John Guy, Richard Holworthy, John Langton, Humphrey Hooke, Philip Guy, William Meredith, Adrian Jennings, and John Doughty. There were twenty-five London merchants in the Company.
90. Bristol Record Office: MS. Calendar no. 07831.
91. Cell, 'Subscribers', pp. 613-14.

92. Theodore K. Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire: Merchant and Gentry Investment in the Expansion of England, 1575-1630*, p. 23, n. 7.
93. Cell, 'Subscribers', p. 621.
94. In August 1610 it was discovered that some of the Bristol members, including Humphrey Hooke and William Meredith, had paid for only half their shares. It seems probable that by February 1612 the company had raised additional capital of £720 by further calls on all members, the Bristol members being presumably asked to participate in this (see Cell, 'English in Newfoundland', pp. 136-7).
95. For the history of the company, see Cell, 'English in Newfoundland'; D.W. Prowse, *History of Newfoundland* (n.p., 1895); Purchas, xix. 405 ff.; J.W. Damer Powell, 'The exploration of John Guy in Newfoundland', *Geographical Journal*, lxxxvi (1935), 512-18; *The New World: A Catalogue of an Exhibition of Books, Maps, Manuscripts and Documents* (Lambeth Palace Library, 1957), pp. 41-64.
96. Guy broke with the Company in 1614: Cell, 'Subscribers', p. 623.
97. For these grants, see Cell, 'English in Newfoundland', pp. 193-6; D.W. Prowse, op. cit., p. 137; Purchas, xix. 445.
98. Society of Merchant Venturers: Book of Charters I, 57.
99. The documents from the Society of Merchant Venturers' Books of Trade relating to this affair were printed by Miller Christy, 'Attempts toward colonization: the council for New England and the Merchant Venturers of Bristol, 1621-1623', *American Historical Review*, iv (1898-9), 678-702. See also Preston, *Gorges of Plymouth Fort and MacInnes, Ferdinando Gorges and New England*.
100. Miller Christy (ed.), *The Voyages of Captain Luke Fox of Hull and Captain Thomas James of Bristol in Search of a Northwest Passage in 1631-2* (2 vols, London, 1894); C.M. MacInnes, *Captain Thomas James and the Northwest Passage* (Bristol, 1967).
101. Printed in Miller Christy, op. cit.
102. Society of Merchant Venturers: Treasurer's Book I, 17.
103. Society of Merchant Venturers: Book of Trade, p. 186.
104. Ibid. p. 194.
105. Theodore K. Rabb, 'Investment in English overseas empire, 1575-1630', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xix (1966), 70. For a detailed examination of investment, see Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire*, which stresses the overwhelming importance of London and concludes that 'it is impossible to ascribe more than minor importance to the role of other ports' (pp. 22-23).
106. For the passage of more than 10,000 emigrants through Bristol between 1654 and 1685, see *Bristol and America*, preface by M. Dermott Harding (Bristol, 1929); a new edition of the two volumes in Bristol Record Office relating to 'Servants to Foreign Plantations' is being prepared by Mr Noel Curren-Briggs.
107. In 1637-8, two ships from New England, three from Newfoundland, and two from the West Indies discharged cargoes in Bristol; in 1699-1700, 24 arrived from America, 50 from the West Indies, and 9 from Newfoundland: Patrick McGrath (ed.), *Merchants and Merchandise in Seventeenth Century Bristol* (Bristol, 1955), p. 281.

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